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SUBJECT: Ambassador's Meeting with Minister of Culture

¶1. Summary. The Ambassador met with Minister of Culture Antonio Preciado on February 15. Preciado began the meeting by saying that he admires the American people, and sees many points in common between the U.S. and Ecuador that he hopes can be highlighted through joint programs between the Embassy and his Ministry. He noted that the Ministry of Culture was created only one month ago by President Correa, and that he is facing the administrative challenges of creating a budget and finding a permanent building to house Ministry offices.

Joint Programs with the Mission

¶2. The Ambassador stated that she hopes the Embassy can work together with the Ministry of Culture, and outlined a number of the Mission's cultural and exchange programs for Preciado, including jazz performances and a jazz student exchange program, a Black History Month exhibit at the Quito City Museum, an English micro scholarship program for disadvantaged youth in Guayaquil, the Youth Ambassadors exchange program, and the Fulbright program.

¶3. Preciado responded enthusiastically to each of these programs, saying that he intends to open Ministry offices in each of Ecuador's provincial capitals so that the people could participate more actively in cultural activities, and that he would like the Mission to think about taking its programs to the provinces to reach new audiences. The Ambassador responded by explaining that the Youth Ambassador program is recruiting candidates from all over Ecuador, and that the Mission will consider holding performances of American bluegrass and jazz in provincial cities through the Ministry's auspices.

¶4. Bio Notes

Preciado is Ecuador's first government minister of Afro-Ecuadorian descent and a native of Esmeraldas, home to the country's largest concentration of afro descendants. Before becoming minister he was a published poet, university rector and Ecuador's cultural ambassador to UNESCO (2003-4). His poetry brought him to the U.S., where he met Maya Angelou, and he said that his poems are taught at the Univ. of California, Santa Barbara, Howard University and Florida International University, and are being translated into English for a soon-to-be-published anthology of Ecuadorian poets.

¶5. Comment: Preciado was genuinely cordial and warm in his meeting with the Ambassador, saying that there was much Ecuador could learn from the U.S. and that he pledged his ministry to creating a fruitful exchange of ideas and people with America. Through PAS, the Mission will work with the Ministry on a number of cultural and exchange programs that can increase mutual understanding and further our transformational diplomacy and outreach goals.

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